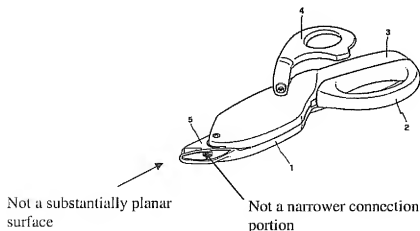


REMARKS

The Examiner rejected claims 68 to 70, 2, 31 and 72 on file under 35 U.S.C. §102 (b) as being anticipated by Pai (US 5,353,504). However, Applicant's protection member as depicted in Figure 6 (previously amended to Figures 6a and 6b) and Figure 7 provides clear distinction. Accordingly, claim 68 as been amended herein to recite a protection member rigidly fixed to the housing via a connection member, one end of the connection member being integrally formed with the protection member, and the other end of the connection member coupled to the housing. The protection member comprises a substantially planar skin-contact surface, and wherein the skin-contact surface is wider than the connection member in a direction substantially perpendicular to a cutting plane. This allows the cutting assembly to cut along the cutting plane through a cast arranged in a cast plane, the cast plane being substantially perpendicular to the cutting plane.

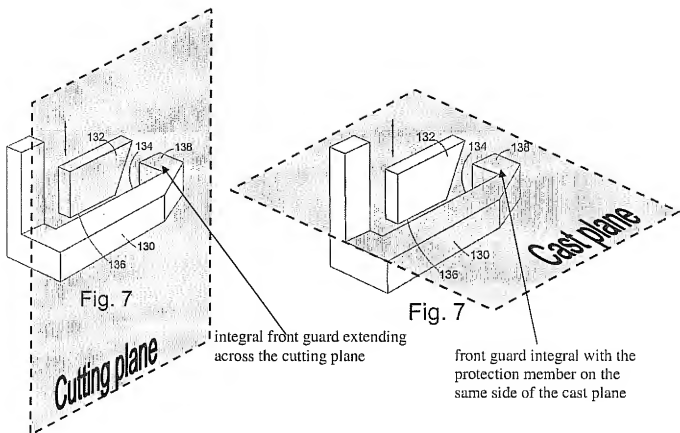
The perceived protection member of Pai appears to be merely a portion of the bottom housing (1) comprising a front end for a cutter blade (13). The alleged protection member of Pai is already a part of the housing (1) and therefore not coupled to itself via a connection member. Furthermore, any perceived skin-contact surface would presumably be on the underside of the bottom casing and. In any event, should the Examiner construe a portion of the bottom housing (1) as a connection member, then any perceived skin-contact surface is not wider than any perceived connection member. Furthermore any perceived skin-contact surface is not substantially planar.



That the connection member of the present invention is not as wide as the skin contact surface allows the connection member to pass through the cut cast whilst maintaining the protection member between the cast and the patient's skin. The asserted protection member of Pai is narrow underneath and cannot be considered wider than any perceived connection member. In any interpretation of Pai, a portion of the housing as wide as the bottom surface must pass through the cut cast.

The application as filed describes the skin contacting surface on page 4 line 25 onwards. The adaptation of the connecting member to pass through any slot or gap is described on page 14, lines 19-28. New dependent claims 75 to 77 have been added. New claim 75 adds to claim 68 that the protection member further comprises an integral front guard extending across the cutting plane, such that the stationary portion cutting edge is located between the front guard and the connection member.

The features of new claim 75 are to be found at least in Figure 7 and the accompanying description, summarized below:



Pai does not disclose any feature that resembles such a front guard. Where the cutting portion of the bottom housing (1) is interpreted as a protection member, all of the bottom housing (1) is located on one side of the cutting plane in order to allow the movable cutter holder (5) to pass the bottom housing (1) to cut.

The functionality of Figure 7 is similar to that of figures 6a and 6b that show pivoting and reciprocation respectively (page 21, lines 9-15). Furthermore, Figure 7 as originally-filed also included an arrow indicative of pivoting; this arrow was inadvertently removed during correction of the drawings to meet formal requirements during the international phase. Accordingly, the embodiment of Figure 7 also includes the pivoting movement of the current claims. In any event, the specification clearly indicates that features of different embodiments can be combined and are not all illustrated for the purposes of brevity.

Similar support for including the features of the alternative embodiments of Figures 27 and 28 may be used for the features of dependent claims 76 and 77. Figures 27 and 28 show profiled

noses (208, 216) with upper tapered surfaces (210, 218 respectively). Figure 28 further shows an additional lower tapered surface (220).

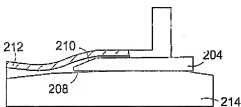


Fig. 27

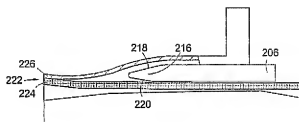
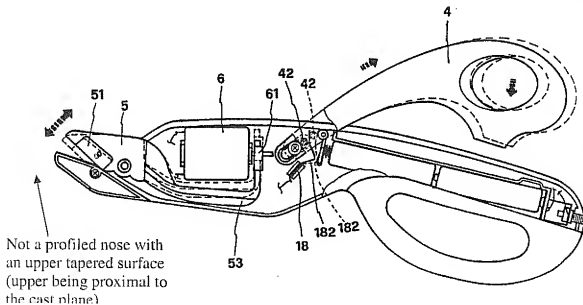


Fig. 28

Even when construing the bottom casing (1) of Pai as comprising a protection member with a skin-contact surface, there can be no assertion that it comprises a tapered nose on the same side of the cast plane as the skin contact surface, the tapered nose comprising an upper tapered surface.



Furthermore, the Applicant respectfully contests the Examiner's assertion that the device taught by Pai is capable of producing a strip of material. The device according to Pai is merely capable of operating as a pair of electrical scissors, with a conventional cutting action between the two cutter blades 13, 51. A device according to the present invention is adapted for removing a strip of material from a cast, with advantages such as those described on page 3, lines 7 to 31. The two

cutter blades 13, 51 of Pai are thin plates that cooperate to make a single cut. The present invention is adapted for removing a strip of material of a suitable width. Accordingly, the connection portion of the present invention may pass through the cut cast where the strip has been removed. Similarly, a spreading tool may be inserted into the gap created by the removal of a strip of material. Accordingly, the Applicant asserts that the rejection of claim 2 is inappropriate.

Conclusion

It is believed that the present amendment places all of the claims in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney if doing so would advance prosecution of this case.

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Respectfully submitted,

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